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Department of
Health Services

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CHDP Provider Information Notice No.: 06-08

TO: ALL CHILD HEALTH AND DISABILITY PREVENTION (CHDP)
PROGRAM PROVIDERS

SUBJECT: FLUORIDE VARNISH IS A NEW MEDI-CAL BENEFIT FOR CHILDREN
UNDER SIX YEARS OF AGE

The purpose of this notice is to inform CHDP providers that, effective June 1, 2006, fluoride varnish applications to the teeth became a new benefit available to all Medi-Cal enrolled children under age six, including children pre-enrolled through the CHDP Gateway. This information can be found in the Medi-Cal Bulletin at <http://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdocs/publications/bulletins/gm/archive/word/gm20060501.doc>.

Although fluoride varnish applications are not a benefit of the CHDP program, fluoride varnish may be applied at the CHDP health assessment visit to children pre-enrolled in CHDP Gateway or already Medi-Cal beneficiaries. In either case, the procedure must be billed separately to Medi-Cal. Currently, claiming for fluoride varnish applications is limited to fee-for-service Medi-Cal providers. Procedures for claiming in Medi-Cal managed care plans have not yet been identified.

Fluoride varnish is a form of topical fluoride that is more effective in preventing tooth decay in very young children than other topical fluorides, and is 1) more easily tolerated by young children and developmentally disabled persons; 2) less toxic; and 3) easier to use and faster to apply than other topical fluorides. It requires no special dental equipment and minimal training to apply, e.g. a non-dental health care provider can easily apply it. Although Medi-Cal will only allow this procedure up to three times in a 12-month period, the effectiveness of fluoride varnish has been found to be greater with more applications.

Since medical providers routinely see infants and toddlers before they are seen by a dentist, medical providers are strategically positioned to implement a simple intervention for the primary prevention and control of tooth decay through the application of fluoride varnish. Physicians are legally permitted to apply fluoride varnish, as are nurses and other medical personnel when the procedure is delegated to them with a protocol established by the attending physician.

All young children who are at moderate to high risk of caries should receive fluoride varnish treatments. Caries risk assessment tools are available through the First Five website listed below. Most CHDP children fall into the high risk category for caries. As a reminder, when caries are found during the CHDP health assessment and recorded on the PM 160, a referral to a dentist must be made.

Medi-Cal is reimbursing for fluoride varnish using Health Care Procedure Coding System code D1203 (topical application of fluoride [prophylaxis not included], child). The rate is \$18.00. The rate is inclusive of all materials and supplies needed for application. The procedure is payable to the medical provider up to three times in a 12-month period. If a fluoride varnish application is provided in conjunction with a CHDP health assessment visit, no additional charge for an office visit will be covered. Fluoride varnish is not a benefit of the CHDP program and must be billed separately to Medi-Cal. Medical providers can, however, bill for an office visit if the procedure is provided at a visit separate than the CHDP health assessment.

A video on conducting an infant oral health assessment and fluoride varnish application can be found online at http://www.first5oralhealth.org/page.asp?page_id=286. Additional information on fluoride varnish can be found at www.first5oralhealth.org. Further information, including the ordering of fluoride varnish materials and another video on fluoride varnish application can be found at http://www.kdheks.gov/ohi/fluoride_varnish_info.html.

Original Signed by Marian Dalsey, M.D., M.P.H.

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Enclosure